

THE FIRST CLIMATE SOUTH INITIATIVE

hosted by the New York Forum AFRICA 2015

This year's NYFA hosted sessions powered by the Climate South Initiative (CSI), an initiative to underline the connections between climate change, economic development, and investment in advance of the December 2015 COP21 meeting in Paris.

According to current estimates by the African Development Bank, the negative effects of climate change are already reducing Africa's GDP by about 1.4%, and the costs arising from adaptation to climate change are set to reach an annual 3% of the continent's GDP by 2030. The economic impact on farmers, coastal communities and insurers is already costing the world more than \$1.2 trillion a year, wiping 1.6% annually from global GDP. The South no longer accepts the role of bystander and, despite significant disparities between the countries of the South, there are now ambitions from Southern nations to share the "two degree" target and take responsibility for our climate alongside developed countries.

Following a series of high-profile events at the UN General Assembly in September, and important strides at COP20 in Lima, there is renewed confidence in a global deal on climate when member countries of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change meet in Paris at the end of 2015. In these negotiations, the voice of the global South will be critical, especially as it relates to the adaptation of emerging economies to the threat of climate change.

Risks and threats to the South

Many key risks from climate change constitute particular challenges for the least developed countries and vulnerable communities, given their limited ability to cope. Threats include:

- Rising sea levels, storm surges and coastal flooding putting populous coastal areas and entire countries such as the Maldives at particular at risk;
- Heat waves resulting in a large number of deaths, mainly among the poor, elderly and labourers, agricultural workers;
- Health risks due to disease transmission compounded by the effect of high temperatures on mosquito populations and bacterial proliferation;
- Water scarcity in Africa and South Asia with rapid rates of urbanisation, industrialisation, inefficient use, and population growth;

- Food shortages linked to warming, drought, flooding, and precipitation variability and extremes, particularly for poorer populations;
- Glacial melt resulting in glacial runoff and increased frequency of glacial lake outbursts in Asia causing mudflows and avalanches;
- Loss of livelihoods in rural areas due to insufficient access to irrigation water and reduced agricultural productivity;
- Loss of marine life along with the goods and services it provides for coastal livelihoods, especially for fishing communities in the tropics.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CSI SESSIONS AT NYFA 15

Following a number of dedicated sessions at the NYFA, the speakers and participants put forward a number of recommendations to communities, corporations, governments and international organisations to elevate current actions to mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental damage. They are as follows:

National level:

- Local content is essential for sustainable development; communities must have ownership, control and management of their power sources. The decentralisation of bottom-up approaches will deliver the most impact to the most communities.
- Diversification of power sources is critical; too often political motives play a part in the energy split, in direct opposition of what resources are most freely available
- Investment remains top of the agenda: governments should lead the way by giving seed money to projects, but private sector investment is essential. Regulatory changes and better governance are required to secure more investment from the private sector,
- Governments need to recognise that green projects provide tremendous opportunity for job creation and economic inclusion, especially for women, who are traditionally under-represented in the formal workplace.
- Governments should promote better access to information about climate change through educational programmes at a local and national level, while also integrating climate change issues into the education syllabus
- Governments should incentivise renewable energy programmes (including through the reduction of customs duties, start-up assistance and/or funds for entrepreneurs, training and skills transfer, and so on)
- Governments (with private sector partners) should create ecological villages (built with energy-independent technologies, and agriculture practices that encompass climate change, for example agroecology and permaculture)
- Each country should formalise its own national agenda to develop their own green economy. The agenda should have clear deadlines and deliverables, and should include

economic diversification, job creation, the transition to inclusive economy, as well as the fight against poverty). Governments must be held accountable for these deliverables to ensure the swift implementation of these programmes.

- By formalising their own programmes to create a green economy, countries can then more clearly identify in which areas they need assistance from trading partners, the private sector, NGOs and international organisations, and international finance mechanisms.
- New finance models are essential: they should recognise the need for development at a community level, and thus recognise the need for creative approaches to requirements such as credit history and assets against which money can be lent.
- Governments should communicate and promote details of their national programmes inside the country but also through the diaspora, to support and encourage young people to return to their countries to participate.
- Governments should support local and small farmers and provide funding so that they can invest in locally-produced equipment and products.
- By implementing co-operatives where different producers can come together and work in an organised manner, governments can ensure more security in agriculture development. And, agriculture should be seen as a real business – particularly as a model for entrepreneurs – rather than just a part-time activity.
- In order to reverse the migration curve from rural to urban areas and offset the increasing burdens on over-populated towns and cities, governments need to enable access to funding and education, as well as creating the right infrastructure for rural businesses. Governments should also provide support for housing programmes, water access, waste management.

International level

- Other emerging markets have models of rural power supply and generation that can be replicated well in Africa, for example India. These models should be considered for Africa.
- Governments should recognise the status of those that have been displaced by natural disasters (environmental refugees) and rethink the legal and institutional instruments to increase solidarity
- Governments should mobilise all players in the green economy and private sector and integrate them into CSR programmes that have a role in adding value to national agenda
- Governments should make the fight against climate change fundamental to the development of national economy and recognise the need for a low carbon economy globally

- combat coastal erosion (construct dykes to prevent the advancement of the sea, plant oxygenating trees along the coastline and so on)
- All concerned parties should understand that sustainability requires a holistic approach, and must include prioritising inclusion in society and the economy, production, efficient and future-proof infrastructure projects, and new approaches to funding.
- By supporting and developing agriculture, with a strong emphasis on small farmers, African countries can lift themselves out of extreme poverty and therefore contribute to the overall development of the continent.

Partnerships

- Green initiatives should be supported financially at seed level by governments at a national and international level to kickstart projects, but PPPs and private sector involvement are critical to take the projects through to completion
- Green funds should be used to support new initiatives, particularly at a community level, that would not get off the ground otherwise.
- Support must take the form of financial support, skills and knowledge transfer, and support in implementation
- Governments and international institutions need to work together to strengthen the protection of the Congo Basin Forest (establishment of wetland parks, reforestation of mangroves)
- When we consider farmers and rural workers, we must take into account the diversity of languages they speak, as well as their differing access to technology, power, supplies and markets. Infrastructure, such as factories, storage facilities, power supply and so on, needs to be developed in rural and urban areas, but should be fit for purpose – one size does not fit all.